

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 657

By Lollar

A RESOLUTION to honor John Charles Wilson on the occasion of his retirement from Agricenter International.

WHEREAS, this body takes great pleasure in recognizing those statesmen who contribute to society in numerous ways and serve as beacons of faithful public service in their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such distinguished person is John Charles Wilson, who is retiring from his duties as president of Agricenter International effective July 1, 2016, after fifteen years of exemplary service to this organization, which is the world's largest urban agricultural research and education facility; and

WHEREAS, John Charles Wilson is renowned as the "Agricultural Statesman of West Tennessee"; his knowledge of agriculture in West Tennessee and throughout the Mid-South has benefited farmers and their families, educated children and the general public overall, provided food for the hungry, and encouraged companies to expand their research; and

WHEREAS, during his distinguished tenure as president, "Agricenter's average annual revenues have nearly doubled, and he has put Agricenter on strong financial footing"; and

WHEREAS, under Mr. Wilson's leadership, two global agricultural corporations, Bayer CropScience and Helena Chemical Company, invested \$20 million in high-tech facilities on the Agricenter property without any government or taxpayer incentives; startup companies such as Delta BioRenewables and AgSmarts also leverage the Agricenter's research farm capabilities, bringing economic development opportunities to agriculture; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wilson is passionate about environmental education and the importance of engaging school-aged children with their food source; each year, Agricenter hosts over 4,000

children from across West Tennessee to learn about sustainable agriculture and the importance of healthy eating; and

WHEREAS, as a result of Mr. Wilson's humanitarianism, the Farmers Market vendors donate food they do not sell at the market (19,000 pounds of fresh produce and bread annually) for needy families across the Memphis area; and

WHEREAS, John Charles Wilson comes from a 120-year family-farm lineage and was active in full-time production, farming for thirty years in partnership with his father on Wilson and Wilson Farms of Arlington, before starting at the Agricenter in 2001; and

WHEREAS, an advocate for conservation stewardship in Tennessee for forty years, Mr. Wilson demonstrated his commitment to the land and the environment early in his career through his work with a regional water quality study and no-till farming methods; and

WHEREAS, involved in the Shelby County Soil Conservation District since 1979, he served as chairman of the Tennessee State Soil Conservation Committee in 1986 and as president of the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts and council member of the National Association of Conservation Districts in the 1990s; and

WHEREAS, in the late 1990s, Mr. Wilson was appointed by Governor Don Sundquist to serve on the State of Tennessee Water Quality Control Board; he is an active member of the Memphis Agricultural Club, Tennessee & American Soybean Association, and West Tennessee No-Till Farmers Association; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wilson has garnered many honors in recognition of his conservation efforts, including the Soil and Water Conservation Society of America's Outstanding Conservationist Award, Young Farmer of the Year for Tennessee, *The Progressive Farmer* magazine's first Environmental Stewardship Award and its "Man of the Year in Service," United States Environmental Protection Agency's Region IV Water Quality Award, Memphis Agricultural Club's Agribusiness Member of the Year, and *Memphis Business Journal's* Who's Who Power Players in Agriculture; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, Mr. Wilson was honored with induction into the prestigious Southeast National Association of Conservation Districts Hall of Fame for his lifetime

commitment to conservation and agriculture, and in 2015, he received the Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award for Lifetime Achievement, which is given to an individual who has devoted at least twenty-five years of effective and valuable service to Tennessee's environmental protection or conservation stewardship; and

WHEREAS, he is fortunate to share love and companionship with his wife of forty-three years, Susan Hall; the Wilsons still live on the farm where they raised their two children, Natalie and SY; and

WHEREAS, having attained the pinnacle of his profession, John Charles Wilson is answering the tantalizing call of retirement; and

WHEREAS, his presence will most certainly be missed, and it is only proper that we commend his probity, acumen, and hard work as he departs Agricenter International; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor John Charles Wilson upon his illustrious career in agriculture, agribusiness, environmental preservation, and conservation stewardship, thank him for his exemplary service as president of Agricenter International, and wish him much continued success and happiness during his retirement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.